

PREFACE

Introduction/Overview

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) and Bureau of Land Management (BLM) distributed the Joint Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement (EIR/EIS) for the East County (ECO) Substation, Tule Wind, and ESJ Gen-Tie projects for public review on December 24, 2010. Recognizing that the public review period began during the holidays, the public review period was extended past the typical 45-day review period to 54 days. In response to public comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS, the close of the public review and comment period was further extended past the original February 16, 2011, deadline to March 4, 2011; in total, the duration of public review period was 70 days. During this time, more than 200 comment letters were received.

The Final EIR/EIS has been prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, California Public Resources Code, Section 21000 et seq.), and in accordance with the Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA (14 CCR 15000 et seq.), as well as the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA, 42 U.S.C. 4321 et seq.), the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulation for implementing NEPA (40 CFR 1500 et seq.), and the BLM NEPA Handbook (H-1790-1, BLM 2008).

The Final EIR/EIS will be used by the CPUC (as the lead state agency), in conjunction with other information developed in the CPUC's formal record, to act on San Diego Gas and Electric's (SDG&E's) application for a Permit to Construct (PTC) and operate the proposed ECO Substation. Under CEQA requirements, the CPUC will determine the adequacy of this Final EIR/EIS and, if adequate, will certify the document as complying with CEQA. After the Final EIR/EIS is completed and certified, the CPUC will make a final decision on the ECO Substation Project.

BLM, as the federal lead agency, will review the Final EIR/EIS and use this document, along with other information in the BLM's formal record, to issue a record of decision (ROD)—one for the ECO Substation Project and one for the Tule Wind Project. The publication of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Notice of Availability (NOA) in the Federal Register will initiate a 30-day availability period for the Final EIR/EIS.

Contents of the Final EIR/EIS

Volumes 1 and 2 of the EIR/EIS present changes that were made to the Draft EIR/EIS as a result of comments received. Revisions were made to clarify information presented in the Draft EIR/EIS and only minor technical changes or additions have been made. These changes and

additions to the EIR/EIS do not raise important new issues related to significant effects on the environment. Such changes are insignificant as the term is used in Section 15088.5(b) of the CEQA Guidelines and under NEPA, do not result in new significant circumstances or information relevant to environmental concerns, or require analysis of a new alternative (40 CFR 1502.9(c)(1)(ii)). Volumes 1 and 2 are completely reprinted from the Draft EIR/EIS and changes made since public review are signified as a replacement, addition, or revision to existing text. Revisions to existing text are signified by ~~strikeout~~ (i.e., ~~strikeout~~) where text is removed, and by underlined text (i.e., underline) where text is added for clarification.

Volumes 3 and 4 of the Final EIR/EIS contain all comments received on the Draft EIR/EIS and responses thereto.